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**TURKEY'S STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT AFTER THE COLD WAR:  
RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**Turkey's Strategic Environment After the Cold War: Risks  
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**ABSTRACT**

AUTHOR: (Michael J. Gaffney)

TITLE: (Turkey's Strategic Environment After the Cold War:  
Risks and Opportunities)

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 18 April 1998 PAGES: 41

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The purpose of this paper is to analyze regional issues effecting Turkey's strategic environment, and to identify their impact on Turkey's future relations with the West and its status as a NATO member. Turkey's strategic environment has greatly changed since the end of the Cold War. NATO no longer looks to Turkey for protection against the Soviet Union. As a result, Western attention to Turkey has gradually declined. At the same time, however, Turkey finds itself virtually surrounded by unfriendly and unstable states, rife with armed conflicts that risk spillover across its borders. Internally, Turkey is challenged by religious fundamentalism, human rights abuses, and a violent Kurdish independence movement. The results of this analysis portray Turkey as a troubled yet growing regional power and continued key member of NATO, providing a check against Iran, a possible resurgent Russia, and a gateway to the Middle East and Caspian Sea for trade and the region's strategic oil reserves.



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Turkey has been of great importance to the United States and Western Europe since its establishment in 1922 as a Democratic Republic. It is strategically located, sitting astride three continents and providing a land bridge between Europe and Asia. Turkey controls access to the Black Sea from the Mediterranean and shares borders with several countries that are of strategic importance in the Middle East, the Caucasus Region, and South Eastern Europe. Turkey is the only Muslim state that is a member of NATO. It contributed in the past to several United Nations operations, and provided many years of security against the Soviet threat to NATO's southern flank. In 1950 Turkey provided an infantry brigade to United Nations forces in Korea, and today Turkey provides a brigade for Stabilization Force (SFOR) operations in Bosnia. The government of Turkey also played a key role in the success of the Gulf War by providing needed access for coalition forces to Turkish air bases and other military facilities in execution of both air and land operations against Iraq.

Turkey's strategic environment has gradually changed since the end of the Cold War. NATO no longer depends on Turkey to protect Europe's underbelly from the Soviet Union. Western capitals' perceptions of Turkey as an important strategic ally

have diminished resulting in a steady decline of NATO allocations for Turkish defense projects.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, along Turkey's borders there is risk of spillover of armed conflicts from nationalistic and ethnic rivalries between states of the former Soviet Union. Major regional powers like Russia and Iran are also vying for control of the oil rich Caspian Sea area near Turkey's eastern borders. Additionally, growing religious influences--some externally sponsored by its neighbors--threaten Turkey's secular form of Government. Because of these reasons it's no surprise that Turkey was recently rated as the most vulnerable member of the NATO alliance in a new US assessment of world flash points.<sup>2</sup>



### Illustration 1.

Also contributing to Turkey's changed strategic environment are disputes with Iraq and Syria over Kurdish independence movements, water rights, territorial issues, and the continued conflict with Greece over Cyprus

The purpose of this paper is to examine the regional issues effecting Turkey's strategic environment, and to identify their impact on Turkey's future relations with the West and its status as a NATO member. The scope of this paper includes a look at Turkey's relationships with the Transcaucasus states: Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan; as well as a discussion of issues causing Turkey's lukewarm relations with Iran, and tense relations with Syria and Iraq. The potentially volatile situation with Greece over Cyprus, and Turkey's new relations with its neighbor to the Northwest, Bulgaria, will also be discussed. The internal problems of religious fundamentalism, human rights, and Kurdish independence issues will also be portrayed against the backdrop of their impact on Turkey's future. This paper argues that Turkey is a troubled yet growing regional power, and will be a continued key member of NATO; providing for western nations a check against a possible resurgent Russia and a gateway to the Middle East and Caspian Sea strategic level oil reserves.

### **Turkey's Relations With The Transcaucasus States**

The Transcaucasus states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia share Turkey's Northeastern borders. These newly independent

states of the former Soviet Union are very diverse in terms of geography, culture, and economic potential. The Transcaucasus region is ripe with armed conflict from nationalist rivalries that frequently spill across what are often disputed borders. Russia has shown to be more than willing to intervene in conflicts near Turkey's borders which results in Russia still being very much on the minds of Turkish military planners.

One of the most important aspects of this region, however, is the existence of large amounts of relatively untapped oil under the Caspian Sea equal to Persian Gulf dimensions. Multinational oil companies estimate that the Caspian region may contain up to 200 billion barrels of oil, plus comparable amounts of natural gas worth over \$4 trillion dollars.<sup>3</sup> Turkey hopes to gain from the exploitation of these reserves, but can only do so by improving relations with the newly independent states in the region, and by reducing regional dominance by Russia or Iran.

The Transcaucasus states effect Turkey's strategic environment in different ways. Armenia hinders Turkey's prosperity and security, while Azerbaijan and Georgia have the potential to advance Turkey's interests.

### **Armenia: Angry With Turkey Over The Past**

The Republic of Armenia is a small, poor, former Soviet Union state. The landlocked country of 3.5 million people is 95

*benefiting*

percent Ch: itions in the East, that include benefiting es of the Caspian Sea area, are partially thwarted by Armenia, and by Armenian encouragement of Russian presence in the area. Armenia looks to Russia for much of its commerce and energy resources. As a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Armenia permits Russian soldiers on its soil. These troops assist with internal security and provide border protection. This gives Russia a strong foothold in the region. The border between Turkey and Armenia is closed and is militarized in much the same manner it was during the cold war.<sup>5</sup>

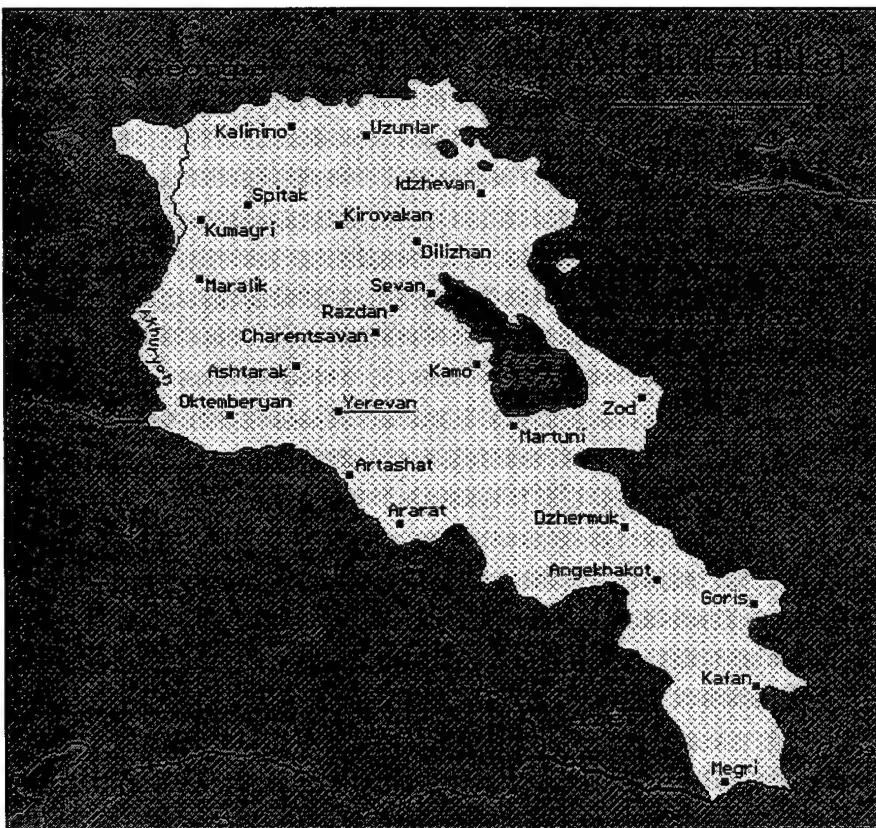


Illustration 2.

Relations between Turkey and Armenia are tense and are not likely to improve in the foreseeable future. There are many reasons tensions exist between the two countries. Most recently Turkey supported Azerbaijan in its armed conflict with Armenia over control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Turkey presently seeks a larger influence over Azerbaijan and a "special relations" because of that country's energy reserves and access to the Caspian sea region.<sup>6</sup> Another issue dividing Turkey and Armenia is Turkish allegations that Armenia is providing assistance to Kurdish rebels in Turkey and the banned Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK).<sup>7</sup>

While the above are enough to alienate the two countries from one another, the most serious and seemingly unsolvable problems arise, not from these present day concerns, but from events that occurred a century ago. From a historical perspective Armenia has long standing territorial claims to much of eastern Turkey. Prior to World War I about 3 million Armenians lived in this part of Eastern Turkey, also called Eastern Anatolia. At the end of the War, because of alleged genocide and a forced exodus, there were fewer than 200,000 Armenians remaining in Turkey.<sup>8</sup> Ottoman rulers decreed this "removal" of Armenians from Eastern Anatolia based on Armenian active support of Russian attacks on the Empire. Those Armenians who were not killed were forced to flee or migrate to the east. Today, Armenians hold a strong bitterness towards Turkey over this forced "removal". Armenians

allege that in 1895, Ottoman Turks, under orders from the Ottoman Sultan, massacred 200,000 of their countrymen in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>9</sup> During the 1915-1922 war years, the Armenian government estimates that between 600,000 and 1.5 million Armenians were also massacred.<sup>10</sup> In both instances, Armenian support for an expanding Russia and the hope for an independent Armenian state led to these tragic events. Over the years, the government of Turkey has vehemently denied the allegations of genocide, and has refused to recognize Armenian territorial claims. A surging of Armenian nationalism in the late 1970's, combined with a national desire for retribution for the alleged massacres, contributed to Armenian terrorist group activity directed against Turkey. Since then, terrorist bombings and assassination attempts on Turkish politicians and diplomats have resulted in numerous Turkish deaths.<sup>11</sup> While Armenian terrorism directed against Turks has greatly decreased since the fall of the Soviet Union, a recent poll shows that 89 percent of Armenians view Turkey unfavorably and as the greatest threat to their nation's security.<sup>12</sup>

To remedy the situation Armenia seeks three objectives. First is the call for an international condemnation of Turkey and Turkish reparations for the crime of genocide against the Armenian people. Second is the return of occupied territories,

and third is financial compensation by Turkey to the Armenian nation.<sup>13</sup>

This situation has virtually frozen any positive relations between the two countries. Prospects for improvements in the near future remain slim. The situation between the two countries fosters Russian presence and influence in the region, impedes prosperity, and partially blocks Turkish access to the oil rich Caspian Sea region. Because of the Russian troop presence in Armenia, it's likely NATO and the US will continue to look towards Turkey as a vanguard against any resurgence of Russian expansionism or movements into the Caspian Sea region.

### **Azerbaijan: Friend Of Turkey But Troubled And War Torn**

Azerbaijan is a small Moslem country of 7 million. Rich in natural gas and oil resources, it gained independence from the Soviet Union in October 1991. Russian troops departed the country in May of 1993 at the request of the Azeri government. Since 1988, Azerbaijan and Armenia forces have clashed over the Nagorno Karabakh region. Nagorno Karabakh is a 4,300 square kilometer mountainous area in Southwestern Azerbaijan. It is mostly populated by ethnic Armenians who have claimed the right of self determination. Armenia supports this claim. The conflict has cost thousands of lives and has produced over 500,000 refugees.<sup>14</sup> Russia has provided support to the Armenians in this war, adding

to the long term distrust the Azeris have of Russians. In the spring of 1993 Armenian forces took control of Nagorno Karabakh and expelled the Azeri population. This action prompted Turkey to bolster its forces along the Armenian boarder and issue a warning to Armenia to withdraw from Azerbaijan. In May of 1994 a cease fire was called, but since then negotiations have stalled and tensions remain high.<sup>15</sup>

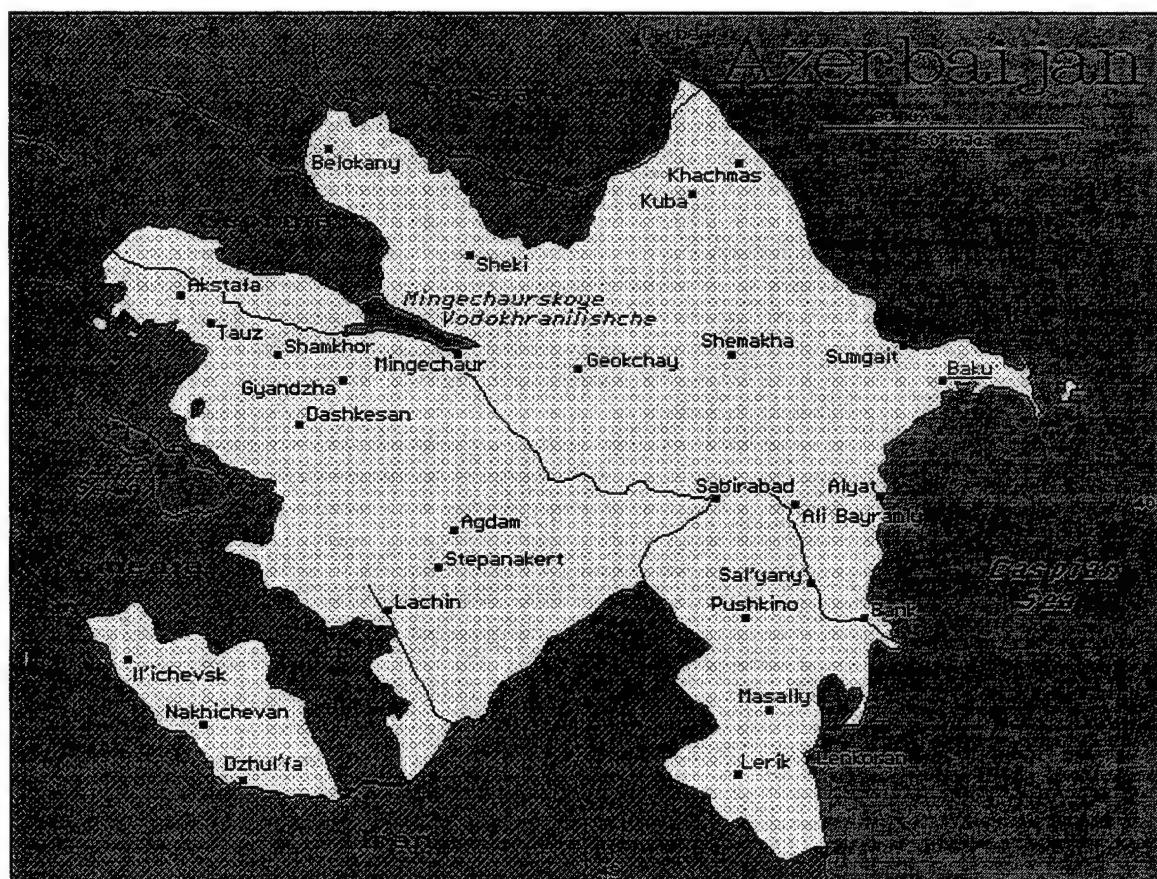


Illustration 3.

This conflict hinders development of the Azeri oil industry which attracts the interests of Iran, Turkey, and Russia, not to

mention the West and multinational oil companies. Turkey is presently in a "tug of war" with Russia and Iran over where to build pipelines to get Azeri and other Caspian Sea nations' oil to its mostly Western markets. It is believed Turkey will win a huge "national prize" if it can become the prime connection between the rich oil producers of the Caspian Sea area and western consumer nations.<sup>16</sup> If Turkey is successful it can perform the task of pulling Central Asia towards closer relations with the West.<sup>17</sup> This will also help Turkey to position itself as the "center of an autonomous geopolitical area rather than as the peripheral extension of a greater Europe."<sup>18</sup> If this occurs, Turkey's importance to NATO will be increased as an important force of stability in the region.

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#### Country Profiles of Turkey and Neighboring States

COUNTRY	POPULATION (MILLION)	RELIGION (% C-CHRIS, % M-MUSLIM)	TERRITORY (SQ KM)	MILITARY (THOUSAND)	GDP (BILLION-US)
<b>TURKEY</b>	62	99-M	755	503	141
<b>ARMENIA</b>	3.5	95-C	30	50	4.4
<b>AZERBAIJON</b>	7.6	87-M	86	56	5.1
<b>BULGARIA</b>	9	85-C	110	30	10
<b>CYPRUS</b>	.6	80-C	9.2	13	6.5
<b>GEORGIA</b>	5.6	82-C	70	16	3.2
<b>GREECE</b>	11	97-C	131	158	75
<b>IRAQ</b>	23	95-M	437	382	54
<b>IRAN</b>	62	98-M	1,648	513	141 approx
<b>SYRIA</b>	14	85-M	185	412	31

Table 1. Country Profiles<sup>19</sup>

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## **Georgia: Poor and Divided, Potential Friend**

Unfortunately, the Republic of Georgia is in no better shape economically than either Armenia or Azerbaijan. In the area of ethnic strife, it is worse. Georgia has had a negative economic growth in the 1990's because of destruction of infrastructure, failure of economic reorganization, and unavailability of imports.<sup>20</sup>

Georgia possesses many ethnically diverse groups that resist any control by a central power. Immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, fighting broke out in several Georgian districts among ethnic groups seeking autonomy. Georgian troops were unable to control the hostilities. The president of Georgia, and former Soviet Union Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, was forced to ask Russian forces to reenter the country in 1993 to stop the bloodshed.<sup>21</sup>

While fighting generally stopped because of the Russian presence, the country found itself partitioned by three autonomous republics: Abkazian, Ajarian, and South Ossetia. The anti-Georgian Ossetians are also trying to unite themselves with North Ossetia across the Georgian border in Russia.<sup>22</sup> These three autonomous republics today occupy about a third of Georgian territory. The continued ethnic strife has virtually devastated the already poor economy of Georgia. Turkey has provided

emergency aid in the form of heating fuel to help Georgia through their cold winters, and has provided assistance in establishing a reliable communications system in the country. Turkey's interests in Georgia, again, as with Azerbaijan, lead to the Caspian Sea oil fields, potential pipeline access, and the desire to lesson Russia's dominance in the region. With Georgia's ethnic strife and dependence on Russia for internal security and economic assistance, Turkey will continue to find itself face to face with Russia for influence in the region.

### **The Middle East Countries: Iran, Iraq and Syria**

To Turkey's Southeastern borders lie Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Like the Transcaucasus states, these three countries also greatly effect Turkey's strategic policies and present numerous national security challenges. Unlike the Transcaucus states, all three of these countries have large populations, big armies, and more highly developed economies.

#### **Iran: Lukewarm Relations, Prime Competitor**

Iran is Turkey's strongest regional competitor. Of all of its neighbors Iran has the potential to present the greatest challenge to Turkey as a growing regional power. Its population and gross domestic product equals that of Turkey, while its land mass is twice the size of Turkey.<sup>23</sup> Relations between the two

countries can be characterized as "lukewarm". While mutually benefiting trade is occurring between the two nations, both are leery of the other over several issues ranging from religion to Turkish support in Azerbaijan.

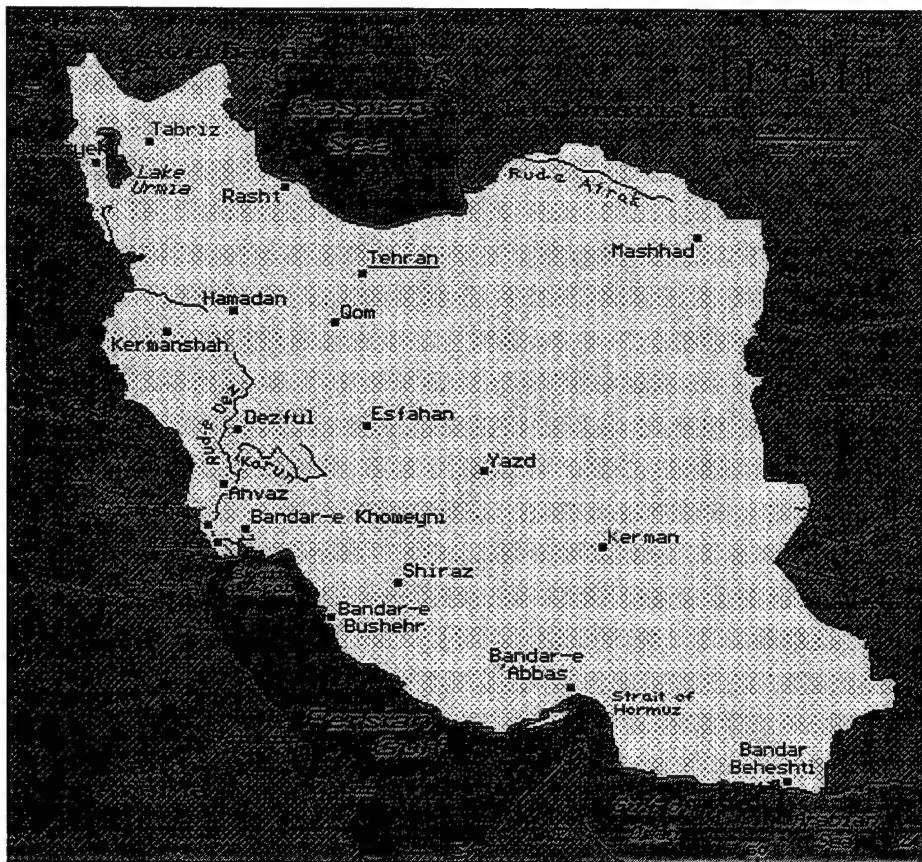


Illustration 4.

Turkey has an open border with Iran for trade.<sup>24</sup> Trade volume between Iran and Turkey in 1996 rose to over a billion dollars from \$950 million a year earlier.<sup>25</sup> Also, Turkey is in the process of developing with Iran a \$1.6 billion, 2,000 mile, natural gas pipeline.<sup>26</sup> This pipeline will originate in

Turkmenistan, travel across Northern Iran and terminate at the Turkish Mediterranean port of Iskenderen. All three countries will benefit economically from this commercial venture which will also serve as a force for more positive regional cooperation. Iran also sees Turkey as a counterbalance against Russian dominance in the Caspian region.

Tensions do exist, however, between the two countries. Iran remembers the 400 year domination by the Istanbul centered Ottoman Empire and does not want to fall under Turk control again. Iran is also concerned about Turkey's support of Azerbaijan and the potential for an increase in nationalist activities by the large Azeri population living in Iran.<sup>27</sup> Turkey on the other hand is concerned about growing religious fundamentalism within its own borders. Secularism in Turkey has been in effect since its founding as a republic in 1923. The Turkish military ardently protects this constitutional tradition.<sup>28</sup>

This summer, Turkey's ruling Islamic Welfare Party was forced out of power by the strong military, and its president Necmettin Erbikan was forced to resign. The military feared that Islamists were trying to undermine the secular state and were adversely influencing Turkish domestic politics. General Ismail Karadayi, Chief, Turkish General Staff, recently stated that "fundamentalists movements have become the number one threat... they remain committed to their goal to destroy democracy and

their secular republic."<sup>29</sup> It is alleged that this Islamic Workers Party is receiving much of its financial support externally, specifically from Iran.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, it is alleged that Iranian agents have been implicated in the murder of prominent secularists in Turkey.<sup>31</sup> This sours Turkish/Iranian relations and has grabbed the attention of the international community. The suppression of Islamic Welfare Party members has led to widespread international condemnation of Turkey by human rights groups. This has led to reluctance on the part of some Western nations, including the United States to sell arms to Turkey. Fearing a loss of accessible arms from its traditional western suppliers, Turkey has sought to strengthen its strategic ties with Israel. This year the Turkish military signed two major pacts on defense cooperation with Israel. Agreements include military sales, equipment upgrade contracts, and combined participation in exercises. Iran is angered over the Turkish and Israeli relationship and charged that this will "alter the balance of power in the Middle East."<sup>32</sup>

Yet another source of tension between the two countries is Turkey's frustration over Iran's larger control and influence of the Transcaucasian States. Armenia and Georgia favor Iran as a partner over Russia and Turkey.<sup>33</sup> Iran's economy can easily absorb their small exports, and unlike Turkey, Iran can satisfy these country's energy needs.

These above factors: conflict over support for religious fundamentalism, desire to suppress nationalist fervor, influence in the Transcaucasus states, pipeline diplomacy, and Turkish-Israeli defense agreements will continue to impact relations between Iran and Turkey, but should not result in any form of armed conflict between the two states. However, if Iran becomes more anti-western and troublesome as a "rogue state", Turkey's geostrategic importance to Europe and the US can not be overemphasized as a tool to leverage Western power against the Islamic Republic.

### **Iraq and Syria: Kurds, Territory Disputes, Water Rights**

Relations between Turkey and its two Southeastern neighbors are tense. The Syrian border is closed and heavily patrolled by both sides, and the Iraqi border region is the location of heavy fighting between Turks and rebel forces of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).<sup>34</sup> The PKK is a banned political party in Turkey that has been fighting for an independent Kurdish state in the Southeastern region of the country. The PKK has been fighting from bases in Northern Iraq using terrorism and guerrilla style tactics against Turkish forces since 1984.<sup>35</sup> It is estimated that more than 27,000 people have died in the conflict.<sup>36</sup> In the last several years Turkish forces have invaded Northern Iraq using commando forces and light mechanized infantry to flush out and

destroy PKK and their support camps.<sup>37</sup> In 1997 the conflict escalated with the invasion of over 50,000 Turkish troops into northern Iraq using both air and armored forces. Iraq has protested these incursions but because of the Gulf War sanctions is powerless to prevent their recurrence. Iran and Syria have also denounced these Turkish incursions into Northern Iraq. These countries fear Turkey's success against the PKK Kurds will bolster its influence over the larger Kurdish populations within their own borders.<sup>38</sup> The former President of Turkey, Suleyman Demirel, accused Syria of assisting in the training of the PKK rebels and supporting their operations.<sup>39</sup> Because the Turkish military believes the protection of the Southern border with Iraq from PKK activities is of national strategic importance it is taking drastic steps.<sup>40</sup> The military is moving towards developing a "security zone" in northern Iraq fashioned like the Israeli buffer zone against the Palestine guerrillas in South Lebanon. This action, if enacted, is sure to anger Arab states, and the existence of Turkish forces on Iraqi soil, in itself, will be a destabilizing influence in the region.

Another problem driving increased tensions between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq is the Greater Antolian Project (GAP). This Turkish project uses waters of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers that originate in Turkey before they flow into Syria and Iraq. Turkey has constructed extensive dams on these rivers, and uses

their waters to irrigate Turkisk crops. As a result, downstream flow of water has decreased by fifty percent in recent years.<sup>41</sup> Syria and Iraq want this percentage decreased but Turkey refuses. Turkey also sells this water to Israel via tanker shipments. This has the effect of "adding insult to injury" to its Arab neighbors.<sup>42</sup> Other problems derive from Iraq's resentment against Turkey for support it gave coalition forces during the Gulf War, and Syrian claims to the Hatay province along the Mediterranean coast which France ceded to Turkey in 1939.<sup>43</sup>

Given the above problems over water, Kurds, territory, and the fact that both Iraq and Syria are heavily armed, Turkey is forced to bolster its defense forces to enforce its policies in its Southeast region, and to deter any aggressive acts by its Arab neighbors. Given this situation, Turkey's military has convinced the civilian government to approve \$150 billion dollars in weapons procurement during the next 30 years. Veysel Yayan, Turkey's Defense Ministry procurement chief, stated on 2 Sep, 1997, that "Our role in NATO is greater now than in the early 1990's due to the instability around us. Unfortunately, NATO has not allocated to us the resources to meet that instability and our larger defense budget is the direct result of this need to shoulder our own security costs."<sup>44</sup> If Turkey is forced to go it alone against the threats of Iraq, Iran and Syria, the cohesion of NATO will be threatened. Turkey could become a hesitant

partner if and when the West calls on it for cooperation and assistance in the region.

### **The Turkish/Greek Cyprus Issue**

A very important issue effecting Turkey's relations with both NATO and the United States is the dispute Turkey and Greece have over Cyprus. Turkish/Greek relations have been tense since July of 1974 when Turkey invaded the northern portion of the island. Turkey took this action to protect the Turkish population living there from coming under the control of the military dictatorship in Greece. This dictatorship backed a coup that toppled the Cypriot government. The leaders of the coup were using the Greek Cypriot National Guard in an attempt to unite all of Cyprus with Greece. After a battle with Greek Cypriot forces resulting in several thousand dead, Turkey consolidated its positions along a "Green Line" which exists still to this day. This cease fire line was brokered by the United Nations and the US, and is presently monitored by 1,200 UN peacekeepers. These soldiers oversee an unsteady peace at a cost of \$50 million a year along a cease fire line that separates an infantry brigade of Turks in the North from an estimated 10,000 Greek Cypriot troops in the South.<sup>45</sup> The UN and the US recognize the Greek Cypriot government on the island as legitimate since that government represents about 80 percent of the population. Turkey however claims that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

(TRNC) is an independent state. No other country recognizes the TRNC. Recent Greek demonstrations along the Green Line ended in confrontations with Turkish soldiers resulting in one Greek death and several wounded.



**Illustration 5.**

Most in the international community see the island as a potential "powder keg". One reason for this is the Greeks are moving towards placing Russian made S-300 air defense missile systems on the island. Turkey has warned against this action.

Installing the air defense systems represents a potentially dangerous escalation of the bitter standoff between the two countries. Another reason for Cyprus being called a "powder keg" is because there are an estimated 180,000 Greek Cypriots who lost their homes by the Turkish invasion and are anxious to return to their properties. Turkish officials will not permit this to occur.

Recently the US initiated an attempt to reduce tensions. In October of this year, Richard Holbrooke, a US mediator, opened talks on Cyprus in Ankara. As he was meeting with delegates over the issue, Greek and Turkish warplanes were confronting each other in the skies of Cyprus.<sup>46</sup> During the Cold War this situation would have produced a strong reaction from Western nations. A war between Greece and Turkey before the end of the cold war would have meant a "rupture in NATO's Southeastern flank".<sup>47</sup> The fall of the Soviet Union, however, has decreased concern by the West over Cyprus. Nevertheless, NATO and the US have decreased arms sales and other military support to Turkey over this issue using the rationale that these arms could be used for an attack on another NATO member - Greece! Turkey's reaction has been to look for arms elsewhere and to further develop its own arms producing industry. This whole situation with Greece over Cyprus has had the effect of alienating Turkey from the West and especially from Europe. Greece has been using its membership in the European Union (EU) as an economic weapon against Turkey,

a non-EU member. It would be in the interests of both NATO and the US if Greece and Turkey could resolve this dispute.

### **The Balkans: Turkish/Bulgarian Relationship**

The last of Turkey's neighbors discussed in this paper is the Balkan state, Bulgaria. Bulgaria is a small, impoverished and troubled state that borders Northwest Turkey. It is yet another of the former communist states that experienced a surge of nationalism with the end of the Cold War. This renewed nationalism was directed in part against a sizable Turkish minority living in the country. About 900,000 Turks presently live in Bulgaria.<sup>48</sup> Bulgaria was dominated for almost 400 years by the Ottoman Empire, and fought two wars against the Ottomans in the beginning of this century. Bulgaria achieved its independence from the Ottoman Turks at the end of World War I. In the early 1990's, anti-Turkish demonstrations, driven by resurgent Bulgarian nationalism, took place in major Bulgarian cities.<sup>49</sup> In May 1992 the Turkish government quickly acted to halt growth of these anti-Turkish sentiments by signing a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Bulgaria. This treaty included agreements on economic, political, and military cooperation. Turkey hopes that this rapprochement will improve its economic interests in the Black Sea and open up ties with Bosnia, Macedonia, and Albania, all of which have sizable Muslim populations.<sup>50</sup> If successful, a realignment of the region away

from Russia and towards Turkey will place it as a new geopolitical center running from Bosnia to the Caspian Sea region, a distance of well over two thousand miles. As with Azerbaijan, if this occurs, Turkey's importance to NATO will greatly increase because of its ability to influence its non-NATO neighbor's actions.

### **Conclusion**

Since the end of the Cold War Turkey has increasingly found itself surrounded by threats stemming from instabilities in the Middle East, Transcaucasus, and the Balkans. Adding the conflict with Greece, internal religious turmoil, and Kurdish separatists, Turkey finds itself challenged from almost every direction. Simultaneously, it has to contend with actions by Russia and Iran, while getting less support from NATO and the West. Yet Turkey also finds itself in a position of great opportunity for influence in the region, especially in the Caspian, and the Balkan/Black Sea areas. While threats to the security of Turkey are now more complex and geographically dispersed than during the Cold War, prospects for economic and defense partnerships with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Bulgaria, and even Israel have potential for improving Turkey's security and prosperity. Turkey will have no choice but to continue its competition with both Russia and Iran over regional influence in the Caspian Sea area. It's critical that Turkey be at least partially successful in

this competition, especially to source its growing energy needs, but more importantly to serve as the spearhead for NATO and US interests in the region.

It is very much in the interest of the US for Turkey to be a conduit for a reliable alternative to oil supplies from the Persian Gulf region, and that no single country like Iran or Russia control the flow of that oil. Additionally, Turkey's direct access to Syria and Iraq will continue to aid US interests and help ameliorate security problems for Israel.

Notwithstanding all its internal problems, Turkey's superior characteristics of population size, territorial riches, economy, and military strength, can enable it to become the dominant regional power. It would be wonderful for Turkey to solve all of its internal and external challenges, but some issues like the Armenian territorial and reparation claims, its long standing dispute with Greece over Cyprus, and the quandary in Iraq are not going to be fixed in the foreseeable future. The potential for Russian resurgence and expansionism is real, and Iranian intentions on the international scene are still in question. For these reasons it is important for Turkey to continue its loyalty to NATO and conversely for NATO to support Turkey. Both Turkey and NATO still remain reliant on each other for strategic security and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

(Word Count 4657)

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>2</sup>Paul Mann and Metehan Demir, "Turkey, Judged as Vulnerable As NATO Readies To Expand," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 7 July, 1997, 47.

<sup>3</sup>"Pipeline Diplomacy," Editorial, The Washington Post, 19 September 1995, sec. A, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>Glen E. Curtis, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, Country Studies (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, 1994), 4.

<sup>5</sup>Author personal experience. (The author is the former Chief of Plans, Operations Directorate, Headquarters, Land South East, Armed Forces South, NATO. He traveled extensively in South East Turkey in the Iran, Iraq, and Syrian border areas during the May 1996 to May 1997 timeframe.)

<sup>6</sup>Shireen T. Hunter, The Transcaucasus in Transition (Washington D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994), 45.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>8</sup>Curtis, 14.

<sup>9</sup>Verj Nerves Nersessian, Armenia, World Bibliographic Series (Oxford England: Clio Press, 1993), p. xix.

<sup>10</sup>Assembly of Turkish American Associations, Armenian Allegations, Myth and Reality (Washington D.C.: Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 1986), 20.

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<sup>14</sup>Levon Chorbajian, Claude Mutafian, and Patrick Donabedian, *The Caucasian Knot* (London, UK.: Zed Books, 1994), xiv.

<sup>15</sup>Lerik Lenkoran, Report on Azerbai November 1995 Parliamentary Election: Baku (Washington D.C.: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1996), 3.

<sup>16</sup>"Pipeline Diplomacy," Editorial, *The Washington Post*, 19 September 1995, sec. A, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup>Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 234.

<sup>18</sup>Mastny Vojtech and Craig R. Nation, *Turkey Between East and West, New Challenges for a Rising Regional Power* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), xi.

<sup>19</sup>GDP figures were taken from *The World Economic Factbook 1994/1995*, Euromonitor PLC, London UK 1994. GDP figures for Iran are approximate. Official Iranian Government figures are wildly exaggerated. The figure on the Bulgarian Military was taken from, Christi L. Zolch, *Bulgaria, In a Time of Change*, (Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Publications Company, 1996), p. 15. All other figures sourced from the Country Study books identified in Bibliography.

<sup>20</sup>Curtis, 152.

<sup>21</sup>Curtis, 227.

<sup>22</sup>Rashna Writer, "North Caucasus: A Dangerous Area," *Defense and Foreign Affairs, Strategic Policy*, (September 1997): 12-24.

<sup>23</sup>Euromonitor, *The World Economic Factbook 1994/1995* (London, UK: Euromonitor, 1994), 225.

<sup>24</sup>Author personal experience.

<sup>25</sup>"Turkish-Iran Trade Increases," *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 May 1997, sec. B, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup>Dan Morgan and David B. Ottaway, "US Won't Bar Pipeline Across Iran," *The Washington Post*, 27 July 1997, sec A, p 1.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Debbie Lovatt, "Islam, Secularism and Civil Society," *The World Today: Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 8-9 (1997): 226-228.

<sup>29</sup>Umit Enginsoy, "Islamist Ban May be Pyrrhic Victory," *Defense News*, 1 December 1997, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup>Andrew Mango, *Turkey, The Challenge of a New Role* (Washington D.C.: The Center For Strategic and International Studies, 1994), 114.

<sup>32</sup>Umit Enginsoy and Brooks Tigner, "Shifting Politics Alter Turkish Military Stance," *Defense News*, 22 September 1997, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup>Hunter, 173.

<sup>34</sup>Author personal experience.

<sup>35</sup>Umit Enginosy, "Infighting Hampers Turkey's Kurdish Security Zone Plan," *Defense News*, 3 November 1997, p. 24.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Author personal experience.

<sup>38</sup>Michael Williamsand Hugh Pope, "Turkey Hammering Kurd Rebels in Iraq," *The Wall Street Journal*, 30 May 1997, sec. A, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup>Demirel, Suleyman, "Commentary: President of the Republic of Turkey," *The Middle East Journal*, (Winter 1997): p. 11.

<sup>40</sup>Enginsoy, "Infighting Hampers Turkey's Kurdish Security Plan," 24.

<sup>41</sup>Mango, 114.

<sup>42</sup>Mango, 114.

<sup>43</sup>Mango, 115.

<sup>44</sup>Enginsoy, "Shifting politics Alter Turkish Military Stance," 8.

<sup>45</sup>Storer H. Rowley, "At the Brink of Civil War About Explosive Cyprus," *Chicago Tribune*, 16 June 1997, sec 1, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup>Gregory R Copley, "Strategic Policy," Defense Foreign Affairs, 11-12, (1997):5.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., xxxii.

<sup>48</sup>F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Volatile Powder Keg: Balkan Security After the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: American University Press, 1994), xiv.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., xx

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